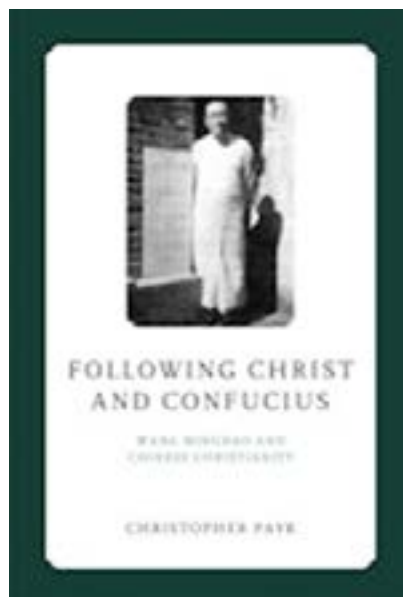


BOOK REVIEW

Following Christ and Confucius: Wang Mingdao and Chinese Christianity. by Payk, Christopher

Stephen Panda Bamboo



Following Christ and Confucius: Wang Mingdao and Chinese Christianity

by Payk, Christopher

Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2024.

227 pages,

ISBN: 978-0-268-20824-0

Payk Christopher explores the impact of Wang Mingdao's life and work in the social context of 20th century China. He elaborates Wang's Confucian Christian thoughts that were deeply influenced by "the Chinese classics, sages, and histories" (Chapter 7, p. 151).

Payk argues against Richard Cook's conclusion that Wang Mingdao was not a theologian because he was not proficient in "academic Christian theology" (Chapter 1, p. 10). However, Payk states that Wang should be regarded as an important theologian like John Wesley, even though he lacks formal systematic training in theology (Chapter 1, p. 11). Neither Wang nor Wesley's theological talents were reflected in the field of complex academic theology. Their theology was a kind of folk theology. Wesley was committed to clearly expressing the core essence of Christian theology to ordinary believers (Chapter 1, p. 11). Wang intended to demonstrate the implementation of Christian theology in practical actions by upholding a moral life of integrity (Chapter 7, p. 146-47). Furthermore, Payk considers Wang to be "a Confucian Christian theologian" because Chinese classics, sages and history have shaped his theological thinking (Chapter 7, p. 145). Wang fully absorbed the profound historical and cultural heritage and moral and ethical

concepts of Chinese Confucian tradition (Chapter 1, p. 11). This book sorts out the influence of Confucian Christian thought on Wang at different stages of his life.

During Wang's formative years, before the age of 21, he was taught by a Confucian Christian teacher at Tsui Primary School. H. L. Zia's Confucian Christian teachings had an impact on Wang. Then an older schoolmate shared his Christian faith with Wang (Chapter 2). When he was studying at Tsui, he memorized a lot of Chinese classics (Chapter 5, p. 119). In the course of his independent period from 1921 to 1937, Confucian culture was his mode of thinking and way of interacting with others (Chapter 3). Throughout the time of the conflict period of 1937-1955, Wang's writings increasingly drew on Chinese classics and ancient texts to encourage Christians to live moral lives in the difficult situation of the Second Sino-Japanese War (Chapter 4, p. 87-88). Wang used the convictions of ancient Chinese historical figures to solidify his refusal to join the Japanese-controlled labor union (Chapter 4, p. 89-92). Wang was also influenced by the idea of a Confucian scholar from the Southern Song Dynasty, who believed that morality should influence politics, which led him to refuse to join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (Chapter 4, p.

96-100). Over the span of his imprisonment from 1955 to 1980, he reflected on ancient Chinese history and carefully studied several books on Confucian thought (Chapter 5). For the duration of staying in Shanghai City from 1980 to 1991, Wang incorporated traditional Chinese classics into biblical teachings in his sermons and conversations with visitors. In addition, he embodied the most comprehensive proof of Confucian thought and Christianity in his "Rehabilitation Request Manuscript" (Chapter 6, p. 132-33).

Wang placed great emphasis on Chinese Confucian classics and Chinese historical works. He integrated Confucian classics, sage stories and historical books into his theological tradition. This highlighted his unique identity as a Chinese Christian theologian

Furthermore, this book argues that Wang Mingdao's theological approach followed John Wesley's Wesleyan Quadrilateral. However, the main difference is in his use of Confucian tradition. Wang placed great emphasis on Chinese Confucian classics and Chinese historical works. He integrated Confucian classics, sage stories and historical books into his theological

tradition. This highlighted his unique identity as a Chinese Christian theologian (Chapter 7, p. 153-54).

One weakness of this book is the tendency to constantly present the Confucian thought or some heroes in Chinese history as a major influence on Wang's life. Even when Wang was released from prison, the author highlighted the influence of Confucian visitors. This gives the impression that when Christians face problems, they might seek inspiration from Confucian classics or heroes in Chinese history, rather than drawing guidance from the principles of the Bible.

This book expounds on another aspect of Wang's ideas from the perspective of his being deeply shaped by traditional Chinese Confucian thought. As a Christian theologian with significant influence in the Confucian context, Wang's thoughts and experiences still inspire and motivate contemporary Chinese Christians. This book is recommended to those who are concerned about the development of the Chinese church.

Reviewer
Stephen Panda Bamboo
Intercultural Studies Program
Asia Graduate School of Theology-Philippines
stfoursv@gmail.com

asian missions advance

Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association *published by*
the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development

*ASIAN MISSIONS ADVANCE, published from 1978 to 1993 by the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development
as the Occasional Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association, has re-started publishing from August 2011
as the Quarterly Bulletin of the Asia Missions Association by the East-West Center for Missions Research & Development*

1520 James M Wood Blvd, #303, Los Angeles, CA 90015, USA
www.asiamissions.net | www.ewcmrd.org
voice/fax: +1 626 577 5564 | email: missionsadvance@gmail.com

ISSN 2765-0936

Editor

Steve K. Eom

Managing Editor

Damples Dulcero - Baclagon

Contributing Editors

Chris Sung; Lalano Badoy
K. Y. Cheung Teng; Isaac Soundaraja; Yohanes Nahuway;
Chong Pae Kim; Chansamone Saiyasak ; Hong Yang

Publisher

East-West Center for MRD Publishing